

DOCUMENTARY

NEWS LETTER

JUNE-JULY 1947

ONE SHILLING

IN THIS ISSUE: The Czechoslovak Film Festival; Monsieur Verdoux;
Worm's Eye View; Feature Film Music and the Documentary;
Film Reviews; Correspondence



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LABOUR PAINS

CONFUSION in the public information services is becoming worse confounded. While a punch-drunk COI staggers round the ring, boxing its own shadow and failing to avoid a hail of administrative uppercuts, a rival ring appears to be being erected for a demonstration round by the Information Officer for the Production Campaign under Sir E. Plowden.

The aimlessness of our public information services today may be directly traced to the failure of the Labour Government to realize the basic necessities of those services. True, they did not abolish the Government information organization as the Tories would have done. But in getting rid of the Ministry of Information, which, for all its faults, had succeeded in providing the right mixture of stimulus and information over a period of six difficult years, a fundamental error was made. The Information Services were deprived of status, of ministerial representation in the House, and, to a large degree, of those immediate powers of initiation and creation without which it is almost impossible for them to survive.

The principles of public information demand, firstly, the establishment of a working relationship between creative workers and administrative workers, based on mutual understanding of purpose and method; secondly, a simple channel through which directives and policy may reach the information people, and, thirdly, the provision of the maximum freedom (having regard to the need to check carefully all expenditure of public moneys) for the creative and technical experts whose job it is to translate information into terms of the mass-media of communication.

There are two main methods by which these principles can be achieved. The first is by the creation of a specific department with a Minister of Cabinet status under whom it directly works. This was in essence the wartime method. The second is by the creation of a National Board, representative of the Government, the administrative machine, and the public, with at least one Minister as a member and chairman, who again would be the spokesman of the information services in the House. This is, in essence, the method adopted by the Canadian Government.

The status of the Central Office of Information represents an uneasy and almost cowardly compromise between these two methods and as a result it is unable to fulfil the three principles of information either with speed or with efficiency.

Structurally, it is unwieldy. Its job is to fulfil the informational needs of Government Departments, and of Downing Street, *vis-à-vis* the public at large, but the machine is so full of cogs and pulleys—many of them duplicated—that it is reminiscent more of Heath Robinson or Rube Goldberg, than of the technological age. Its domination by two committees of PROs and two Ministers—the one concerned with overseas, and the other with home matters—is bad enough. Worse still is the general effect of watertight departmentalization at a time when most major public issues cannot be regarded as the perquisite of any single department, but rather as a reflection of the activities of whole groups of departments.

Psychologically, the COI suffers acutely from its status as an 'Agency'. Although this word can be regarded as active, rather than passive, in intent, its interpretation under the existing set-up is likely to be in the direction of passivity, both internally and from the point of view of the user departments. Information budgets, like all other budgets, are limited. Departments are compelled to use the COI for their information programmes (quite rightly, since otherwise chaos would ensue), and are therefore inclined to press violently for maximum attention to their own programmes. On the other hand, the COI, finding itself torn between thirty or so separate programmes which are bound to total something much in excess of the overall budget, has no direct court of appeal other than the unwieldy structure at the top, which, incidentally, includes the assembled PROs of all the departments concerned.

Moreover, the creative aspect of information demands the initiation, by the COI itself, of specific plans and programmes; and for the reasons already stated this important aspect of its work seems to be being pushed more and more to the wall.

The whole question of public information must be examined afresh. If necessary the COI must be written off as a costly experiment, and a fresh start made. This is a task to which Mr Herbert Morrison might well turn his immediate attention. For a start, he might re-read the recommendations of the Arts Enquiry Report on the Factual Film, the constitution of the Canadian Wartime Information Board and National Film Board, and, not least, a confidential document, believed to have been drawn up for him by John Grierson in 1946, when the constitution of the COI was under consideration. In any case, something must be done, and done quickly.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The cover picture on this issue is a production still from the Czechoslovakian Puppet film *Mr Prohouk's Conversion* which was shown in London at the Festival

The New Board

THE ALERT READER will observe that the size of DNL's Editorial Board has considerably increased. The new names listed on our mast-head include some which are familiar outside as well as inside the documentary film movement, and all have been linked with important achievements in their field. The expansion has been decided upon as a means of increasing its representative character and of adding to the number of documentary groups whose view-point DNL will seek to express. It has for some time been felt in Film Centre and amongst the older members of the Board that means should be found of putting DNL at the disposal of the maximum number of documentary film-makers to form a link between them and the public which they serve. The extension of the Board can be regarded as a step in this direction.

Silent Slaves!

SOMETIMES THE film industry takes our breath away. There are certain sections of it which appear to be of the opinion that the big world is just an alley off Wardour Street and that those benighted people unfortunate enough to be denied a habitation in the Street itself must on no account venture to lift an eyebrow in criticism of what goes on in that resplendent gunman's grotto. We are thinking particularly of the recent suggestion that certain BBC scripts should be submitted to Wardour Street before being broadcast. The idea that the film critic should regard himself as a servant of the film industry is not new but things are coming to a pretty pass when the public itself is moved into the same category. Or can it be that some of our friends in Wardour Street really do think that the primary function of the British public is to present itself in the guise of a flock of sheep to await, in all docility, the Wardour Street shearing?

The National Theatre Club

THE ROYALTY THEATRE in Dean Street, disused for many years, has been purchased by National Theatre Club Ltd., a new non-profit-making company. Chairman of the Company is the Rt Hon Alfred Barnes, present Minister of Transport, who, it will be remembered, was first Chairman of the People's Entertainment Society, until his resignation on his appointment to the Government.

Plans have already been completed for the entire reconstruction of the interior of the building as a modern theatre-cinema, with restaurants and other club services, including residential accommodation. It is planned to present orchestral concerts and dances for members, in addition to films and stage performances of every type. The policy of the Club with regard to films is not yet decided, being dependent on the decisions of the membership, but it seems likely that it could be made available as a very convenient venue for film society shows and other private performances.

It is hoped that club facilities will be available by the end of this year. The date for the re-opening of the theatre is not yet announced, being dependent on building difficulties, but no great delays are expected. The growth of this new entertainment centre in Soho will be watched with great interest. Membership is already

available, at three guineas a year for London members, and one and a half guineas for those living outside.

Cambridge and Film

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY now has an Educational Film Council. Set up at a meeting in February, the Council has just issued a leaflet stating its aims and objects. Cambridge has always taken a keen interest in films, and it is right and proper that it should be the first major University to form such a Council. In addition to stimulating the use of films in Cambridge, the Council aims to link up with people interested in visual education in other Universities. A great deal can come from the lead which Cambridge has given.

Information, please

WE LEARN FROM John Curthoys that he is planning a book on 'The Development and Technique of the Film Strip as a Visual Instructional Aid'. He says it is to be the first standard work on this subject and tells us that information on the earliest days of this new aid to learning is exceedingly sparse. We have promised to pass on to him any information which our readers may have on this subject.

The Survey of Surveys

FOR SOME TIME NOW DNL has been irked by the embarrassing fact that it is at present conducting no questionnaire. All reputable organizations should today be ready to cross-examine the public on any and every subject of outstanding, moderate or no interest, and we propose to remedy our own lack at the earliest possible moment. We have wisely decided to devote some considerable attention to the framing of the questions. We are given to understand by expert practitioners in this field that only by the most skilled wording of the question, can one be confident of the satisfactory nature of the answer. So far, we are only completely happy with two of our own question-framing attempts and we feel that our readers will not abuse the confidence we place in them when we reveal that the public of Great Britain and Northern Ireland will shortly be invited to let us have the benefit of its opinions on the following matters:

- (1) If you are looking for a film brilliantly imaginative in theme and incredibly polished in treatment would you prefer to see
 - (a) An intolerably bad second feature film, atrociously photographed and edited, with an imbecile commentary?
 - or (b) A spanking documentary which is both brilliantly imaginative in theme, and incredibly polished in treatment?
- (2) Which do you believe to be of the greater importance and social significance
 - (a) An important and socially significant documentary?
 - or (b) An unimportant and socially insignificant non-documentary?

We feel that the answers to these questions will leave the world in no doubt whatsoever as to the wide extent and overwhelming nature of the demand for an increased showing of documentaries in the cinemas.

THE BRITISH CINEMA AT THE GALLUP

TEACHERS and sociologists in this country have at last begun to take a serious interest in the cinema and the part it plays in public life. One can instance the storms which have blown up in educational circles over Saturday morning Children's Cinema Clubs, and the various sociological inquiries which have been conducted recently. Now it is the turn of the film industry itself to take note of its public, and to observe its shifting moods.

Most important is the news that Dr Gallup is to come to this country. His mission, apparently, is to give British film-makers a lesson in how to be scientific about judging the tastes and opinions of the cinema-going public. One remembers that Mr Eric Johnston (who has taken over the well-known Hays office) visited Britain only a few months ago to give similar instruction in Hollywood's idea of morality in the cinema. Between Dr Gallup and Mr Johnston the primrose path which the British producer is being asked to walk promises to be distinctly uncomfortable. In the States the film industry has always been concerned with keeping on the right side of its patrons for reasons best known to us all. Today, mounting production costs have accentuated Hollywood's fears, and one of the remedies it has flown to is scientific audience research. Without wanting to throw any doubts on the methods of sampling used (Dr Gallup has a number of accurate forecasts to his credit, particularly in the last few Presidential elections), one cannot help wondering what will be the result if such methods are applied willy-nilly to film-making. After all, film-making is an art and art so often resides in the unexpected. Carefully formulated prescriptions for the would-be creative worker, whether they issue from the art academy, the correspondence course or Dr Gallup's 'pulse chart', are never very sure guides. But after all it isn't art which Dr Gallup is concerned with, nor even the public pulse, it is first and foremost the public pocket. The *Kinematograph Weekly* for May 1st reprints a very illuminating article from the American journal *The Screen Writer*. It deals with the Gallup method of measuring the box-office value of films and contains this statement among others by Dr Gallup:

'Our reports rate "audience reception value"—that is, report the proportion of those who like the story idea and those who do not. Always, the likes and dislikes are in proportion to the amount of money each group normally spends at the box-office, by age, by sex, by income group, etc.

'Audience Research cannot tell a producer whether or not a story is worth \$20,000, \$100,000, or \$500,000, but ARI can point out that this story starts with initial interest equal to, greater than or less than other properties which were sold for \$20,000, \$100,000 or \$500,000.' Nothing could be more explicit than that.

The other public inquiry which has received attention recently is the Bernstein Film Questionnaire. It differs in many respects from Dr Gallup's Audience Research Inc. Whereas Dr Gallup aims to take account of public reaction to films in the producer's interest, Mr Bernstein's Questionnaire sets out to discover the public's reactions as they affect the exhibitor. Mr Bernstein is the owner of the Granada circuit of cinemas and the questionnaire (which is the sixth in a series first started in 1927) was circulated to the patrons of his cinemas. According to reports in the Press 217,400 questionnaires in all were answered. At first sight this may seem quite a substantial sample. On the other hand, no evidence has been provided in the Report about the distribution of the people replying, according to sex, age, occupation, income-group, etc. The fact has also to be taken into account that of the 36 cinemas in the Granada Circuit, 20 are in suburban areas in London and the Home Counties, 4 in Shrewsbury, 2 each in Bedford, Rugby and Mansfield. With little or no representation from the Midlands and North and with poor regional distribution generally, one must weight the findings accordingly. The

questions asked cover a fairly wide range, though a number are of small general interest. Compared with the last Bernstein Questionnaire of 1937 it is perhaps interesting to note that British stars for the first time head the list of favourite actors and favourite actresses, i.e. James Mason and Margaret Lockwood. More relevant are the expressions of taste in the matter of types of films and programme length and composition: 70 per cent want 3-hour programmes; but only 20 per cent are in favour of a single-feature programme, though it is possible that people do not quite realize the kind of variety which could be introduced into the supporting programme. The question about single-feature programmes is framed as follows: Do you prefer one long film, news-reel, short and organ solo? This does not appear a particularly clear question, and it is fogged by the introduction of the organ solo. (A later question shows that those who prefer a short film outnumber those who want an organ solo by 50 per cent.) This of course raises the problem, on which so many questionnaires come to grief, of exactly how questions should be worded. It is very difficult to frame a question in such a way that it will elicit the type of answer required without biasing that answer in advance.

The report has some interesting reactions about cinema-going habits. 50 per cent say that they go to the cinema regularly, choosing the one with the best film, and 21 per cent go for particular films—which indicates a higher degree of selection than one might have imagined. 66 per cent say they go to a particular cinema because it has the best film. But it is a human failing to want to give the impression of acting at all times from deliberate choice, however untrue that might be.

As for actual films or types of films, the answers show a marked preference, in feature films, for drama, followed by adventure and crime. Strong dislikes are expressed of horror and cowboy films and of full-length cartoons. In the case of short films, cartoons, news magazines, travel and sport head the list of likes, and social developments and science the list of dislikes. It is difficult to know whether the various categories used to describe features and shorts are explicit enough. Superficially the answers would suggest, among other things, a strong bias against documentary films. On the other hand, when a further question asked which of 36 selected films were considered to be the best, one finds that the list is headed by *The Way to the Stars* (a story-documentary), *The Captive Heart* (another documentary type picture) is third, and *True Glory* (a pure documentary made by the combined US and British Service Film Units) is sixth. At the same time all three films were convincing and well-made, which suggests, as one would imagine, that it is the quality and authenticity of the film which appeals and not the category into which it falls.

That is yet another of the difficulties which those who draw up questionnaires must face, and one of the most important. Statistical inquiries can provide a great deal of useful information, particularly of a quantitative kind, but they cannot assess quality, nor the power of ideas or imagination. Whatever Mr Bernstein's questionnaire or Dr Gallup's pulse charts may say, some films will succeed and others fail for reasons which cannot be pin-pointed on a chart. In as far as the making and showing of films is an industry, market research is a very necessary activity. But one is forced to remember how limited is the choice and type of film at present offered to the public in the ordinary commercial cinema. By comparison the much criticized BBC, for example, provides a great richness and variety of entertainment. One should therefore beware of the techniques of market research being employed not to widen the scope of cinema entertainment but to restrict it even further to the conventional film forms and to accepted themes, with no real thought for the public interest.

SHAKESPEARE ON THE SCREEN

AND ON THE AIR

This article is the substance of a lecture delivered to American and English teachers at a Shakespeare study-course organized by the British Council at Stratford-on-Avon in April 1947.

It is hardly possible to write about the presentation of Shakespeare without being controversial. With all proper apologies, therefore, I propose to begin with two categorical statements about Cinema and Radio, which must serve as my basic terms of reference in this article. Here they are:

First, the Cinema is an art. It is the first and only new art form to be discovered by man within recorded history. He could not have discovered it earlier because it is the child of the industrial revolution. It is the one positive creative discovery of the machine age, for it depends for its existence on machinery, chemical processes and electricity. It is an art because it represents the end of that quest for representation of life in movement which began when the cave men of Altamira painted those leaping figures on the walls of their caverns. Despite the sound track, it is an art because it is visual.

Second, Radio is not an art form—though I am sure that with the development of television it will become so—for with visuals it will take on the basic creative attributes of the film. But at present it is mainly the transmitter of other art—music, and, as we shall see, in a way special to itself, of drama.

With this preamble—all too categorical because it must be all too brief—I would now like to put before you some ideas about the method by which, through radio and film, the work of the world's greatest poet and dramatist can be brought to millions who might otherwise never know or understand him. For film and radio are mass media. They can reach everyone all the time. So, whatever the problems of technique and of interpretations, no one can argue against the need to use these media to bring Shakespeare to the world.

We can best see the problem by starting from the written word.

I suspect that the average reader of Shakespeare's plays is impressed more by the poetry than by the drama. Many people have ordinary natural limitations to their imagination, to seeing in their mind's eye. And a Shakespeare text is not, like a text by Shaw or Barrie, plentifully garnished with explicit stage directions. Poetry, and the drama arising from the interplay of character—these are easily obtainable from reading Shakespeare—but for the rest, surely all of us would confess that to see a Shakespeare play performed for the first time is, quite precisely, a revelation. The physical and spatial characteristics have not been fully imagined by the reader. On the stage something quite new appears.

To pick up the text of *Love's Labour's Lost* and read it for the first time may be confusing and rather disappointing to anyone who is neither a scholar nor a person of the theatre, nor endowed with an exceptional imagination. To read the same play with the assistance of Harley Granville Barker's preface is in itself a revelation—for he speaks largely of the *living* play—that is, how it can be staged and how, in terms of the theatre of his own day, Shakespeare expected it to be staged.

Finally, if you have the good luck to see it well performed, then it is magic; and there, at last, is Shakespeare's work itself. From now on you can re-read the play with your mind's eye clear and focussed.

Now the technique of radio, despite its lack of visuals, does provide an opportunity of enlarging appreciation and understanding. Shakespeare's words are, after all, written to be spoken, and the interplay of fine voices speaking fine lines supplies a means of interpretation, and of heightening the emotions. This holds true, only if the powers and limitations of the medium are understood. Radio producers and radio actors have to remember that the images they are creating in the listener's imagination are changing like waves on the sea. Each listener is seeing a different picture, which he draws for himself under the stimulus of the spoken word—that is, from what is said and the way it is said.

But there is not a common stage picture, shared by all the audience, such as you have in the theatre. The rumbustious or the rhetorical—effective if you can see *in propria persona* the scene, the actor, and his gestures—become, as often as not, idiotic through the loudspeaker.

And so the production of Shakespeare on the air must be regarded as analogous more to the performance of a symphony than of a stage play. Some listeners will have their eyes shut, and will be picturing to themselves faces, gestures, rooms and landscapes. Others may be following the work in the score, as it were—and they, too, will be seeing something beyond the printed page. The voices of the actors therefore must be related to this situation, and not to the stage of an imaginary theatre packed with an imaginary audience. Otherwise they will find that their words have vanished 'into the air, and what seemed corporal melted as breath into the wind'. In fact, to present Shakespeare on the radio depends on a complete understanding of the diverse nature of the listener's imagination. As one sort of listener I object violently to the use of descriptive commentary to explain the action. On the other hand, I do not in any way object to the use of sound (be it music or otherwise) to add perspective to the scenes which I am imagining to myself. But another listener may hold exactly the opposite views. And neither producer nor actor has any opportunity of knowing, or feeling, how this multifarious audience is reacting.

I am not a radio man, and must speak with deference, but I believe that Shakespeare on the radio is best when the producer devotes all his energy to the speaking of the words by the right voices, and uses the other means at his disposal—commentary, effects, music, to the minimum. For him, Shakespeare is the imagist more than anything else. Images created by words—as for instance the description of Cleopatra's barge, and of Antony in the emptied market place.

This is the very point at which we may turn to the film. What a shooting script is to be found in that famous speech! You can imagine it in Technicolor, directed by Cecil B. de Mille. It

would be the climax to a previous sequence showing Caesar and his friends making 'the night light with drinking'—'eight wild boars roasted whole for breakfast' and 'much more monstrous matter of feast' (—a challenge to de Mille there!) Then the golden and purple barge, the cupids, the mermaid-gentlewomen, the multicoloured fans, the enormous crowd surging from the marketplace to the river banks . . .

There would in fact be only two things missing—the 'strange invisible perfume', and the poetry.

Of course this approach to filming Shakespeare is a *reductio ad absurdum*. It would lead us into surrealist madness with a similar Technicolor technique being applied to Macbeth's:

'this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red'.

The whole point of the Cleopatra speech is that it is a description of something which has happened (lifted from Plutarch and transmuted by Shakespeare into pure poetry), and the film producer's problem is not to translate what it describes into visuals but *so to present it that both its poetry and its dramatic relevance to the story are emphasized and pointed*.

Now, in the film, we have the genuine image, observed in common by all the audience, and not the mind's-eye image of the radio. Therefore the filmic approach basically is to Shakespeare the dramatist. But this must not be taken to mean that a film performance of Shakespeare can be considered as equivalent to a stage performance. That idea would lead us to put the actor on a stage, and place the camera in the middle of the stalls, and thus merely to record what the audience in a theatre would see. But that is not cinema. The whole quality of the film resides in the fact that it creates its own geography and its own time. That is, the spectator's viewpoint is constantly changing, and his temporal sense can be elongated or shortened according to the editing of the various strips of celluloid of which the film is made up.

The perfect film is, of course, conceived right from the start only as a film, and not as a translation from another form of expression. But it is a young art, and people like Vigo and Mayer, who could conceive things in screen terms only, and without reference elsewhere, are still rare. Moreover, there is no reason why Shakespeare should not be translated—I would almost prefer to say transmuted—to the screen so that all his poetry, all his drama, remain intact. Indeed, I discovered the other day when re-reading the Poetics, that Aristotle and Mr Samuel Goldwyn would find themselves in almost complete agreement on the former's thesis that 'Every tragedy . . . must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, song'. I said 'almost' because the fourth quality might give Mr Goldwyn a moment's pause.

However that may be, I think we can all agree that the problem before the film-maker is to strike a balance between the form of Shakespeare's work and the elaborate possibilities inherent in the film medium.

It is agreed that just because Shakespeare often wrote in images which the stage could not physically reproduce it is not necessary for the film, which *could* reproduce these images, to do so. What then are the positive contributions it can make?

Speaking first on a severely practical level, it can provide the movement and pageantry which Shakespeare himself demands. Two stage direc-

tions taken at random will explain this point. They are both from 'Coriolanus'.

The first: 'They all shout and wave their swords; take him up in their arms, and cast up their caps'.

The second: 'Titus Lartius, having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward Cominius and Caius Marcius enters with a lieutenant, a party of soldiers, and a scout.'

Now it is perfectly true that you can get away with this sort of thing lavishly or shabbily—according to resources—in the theatre. But there is no doubt whatever that the scenes in question would benefit dramatically, and with Shakespeare's full approval, if they were presented with the realism, and the scale of action, which can be so easily and vividly achieved on the screen.

Pursuing this thought a little further, let us take *Macbeth*, Act V, from Scene II onwards. In 279 lines the scene changes five times (one scene is only ten lines long), and the action involves the approach of the English army to Dunsinane, the death of Lady Macbeth, and the final issue between the two armies and between Macbeth and Macduff. This act is always the bugbear of the stage producer—but gives the film producer a wonderful opportunity to keep the flow of action going, and to present it on a scale which, because convincing, would throw the drama of Macbeth's fall into proper relief. One might even be bold enough to say that only on the cinema screen would it be possible to carry out the intention of Act V of *Macbeth*. And I think similar examples will readily occur to all of us.

Hitherto there has not been enough filming of Shakespeare to provide sufficient experimental material by which theory and practice can be, as the examination papers say, compared and contrasted.

As far as I know, the only Shakespeare plays to be filmed have been these: *The Taming of the Shrew*—a very early talkie, with Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. This I only recollect rather vaguely, but I remember enjoying it very much. And in any case *The Shrew*, with *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is likely, by its own nature, to be a wholly unrepresentative example. Then there was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, produced by Max Reinhardt. Although it had many faults—not least its preoccupation with all the trickeries of film technique for the fairies, it had some lovely things in it—including a very young Mickey Rooney as Puck, played, not as so often on the stage as an extra-effeminate Peter Pan, but as an earthy, dirty urchin. Then again there was the English production of *As You Like It*, with Elizabeth Bergner, of which one can only say, with Regan, 'Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks'. There was *Romeo and Juliet*, with Norma Shearer and Leslie Howard, drowned in an inconceivable elaboration and embroidery of crowds and supersettings. Of this I remember as good only John Barrymore's Mercutio—and he played it as a straight stage part with no concessions to camera.

And finally, Laurence Olivier's production of *Henry V*.

This remarkable work does in itself provide a sermon on the filming of Shakespeare. This film was most carefully thought out—obviously in view of the challenge of the Prologue:

'can this cockpit hold

The vasty fields of France? or may we cram

Within this wooden O the very casques

That did affright the air at Agincourt?

Shakespeare's answer was to ask his audience

to use their imagination—and that, with his help, is not always too difficult—as witness the great Prologue to Act III describing the English fleet holding course for Harfleur.

Now Olivier and his colleagues realized that there must be a middle course between the limits of the stage of Shakespeare's day and the almost limitless powers of the film camera. They saw, too, that the play could be translated to the screen through achieving a perfect symmetry of shape in space and time—rather like a water lily which opens at dawn and at evening closes 'all its sweetness up'. So they began and ended the film by reconstructing a performance of the play in the Elizabethan theatre. In between they modulated, as it were, from a stylized approach into absolute realism—the night before Agincourt and the battle itself—and then back, through stylization, to the theatre.

There is no time to analyse further the many great qualities, and the faults (not a few) of this remarkable film. But I think that it is a revelation of what can be done in screening Shakespeare by artists of intelligence and integrity. But note that it does not provide a cast-iron formula. The shape and style adopted for *Henry V* arose from the internal qualities of the play itself. They should not, necessarily, be imposed on other Shakespeare films—each play must be recreated in screen terms according to its own special soul. What the film of *Henry V* has proved is that this can be done to the benefit, and not the detriment, of Shakespeare's supreme art. Olivier's new venture—a film of *Hamlet*—is of the bravest—an Everest climb after a trial scramble up Snowdon. But of that, no more until it is shown.

To sum up—the essential problem of filming Shakespeare is to use the special qualities of the film medium to point the essential qualities of Shakespeare's poetry and Shakespeare's sense of theatre. His own qualities being universal, it is the film-maker's job to control and limit the more obvious possibilities of the medium in order that the real stuff of Shakespeare is not confused or smothered by the elaborate, the spectacular, the finicky, or the falsely pretentious. It is his job, too, to try, in interpreting Shakespeare to cinema audiences, to match his exuberant imagination in kind.

Here are some tentative examples—merely designed to indicate how the special, the unique medium of cinema can be legitimately used to enhance and not to hinder Shakespeare's work.

First—the speech I have already referred to—the description of Cleopatra's barge. Here the problem, in film terms, is for the picture to enhance the descriptive poetry of the sound track. We have already suggested that to film what is described would be ludicrous. Other than that there are two possibilities. The first would involve an absolutely static and continuous shot of Enobarbus speaking the lines. His gestures would be cut to a minimum, and the effect would be obtained by the beauty of his voice (and no background music please) and by the power of his eyes and his facial expression. The second method would be the method of abstraction. That is, one would evolve shapes in motion which would match, rather than illustrate the words, and which, perhaps, would help to distil the magic of the words. (I assume, of course, that the film would be in colour.) Let Enobarbus start his speech with the camera trained on him. But almost immediately it would move away on to some object of ornament. The scene, we must remember, is a room in Lepidus's house, and

it may be presumed to be richly furnished. As the camera reaches this object—a piece of rich material, or a flagon, or something of the sort, the focus would be altered so that it became a coloured blur—a shape and no more. Then, item by item of Enobarbus's description, the camera, always moving, would weave patterns—relevant in an abstract, not a factual way, to what was being spoken of, out of the blurred, soft outlines of the furnishings of the room. Well, it might work, it might not. Unless it is one day done we shall never know.

Two more ideas—both from *Macbeth*: First—the representation of the witches. I take Act I, Scene I. Fade in. A desert place. A thunderstorm raging on a bleak moor. Rain lashing across the grey tussocks of grass. A sky racing with clouds. And what are those—are they three thorn trees swaying and bending in the wind? Or three weird sisters dancing fantastically in the storm? The latter perhaps—for out of the screech of the wind comes the screech of voices—and now they are turning widdershins—or is it that we are moving (with the camera) around them? Perhaps we shall never be certain—but there is no time to think further, for with a final clap of thunder everything clears and we are in rain-washed windy sunlight outside Duncan's tent, and the story is beginning...

Second: Act V, Scene V. A vast stone hall in the castle of Dunsinane. Seyton has just told Macbeth: 'The Queen, my Lord, is dead'. Macbeth sits down slowly—on a stool near the huge fireplace. The camera is close to him, looking down on him from a little above him. He begins to speak in a low voice—'She should have died hereafter...' and so on. When he gets to 'Tomorrow and tomorrow' the camera starts to move slowly and steadily backwards and upwards, though the sound of his voice remains at constant volume, and by the time he comes to 'told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing', he is a tiny figure, seen from a great height, alone in the vast cavern of his castle. Thus, I think, we can point the universality of his speech by a withdrawal, rather than by a searching out in close-up of the expression on his face. Then—as he says 'signifying nothing', a second tiny figure appears running across the great hall. It is the Messenger. At this moment the camera dives down again with inconceivable rapidity, so that by the time he is kneeling at Macbeth's feet we are close to both of them, can see the sweat on the Messenger's face, the quick rise and fall of his breast, can hear his breathless words—we are back in the world of grim action—so that when Macbeth strikes him it is like a blow in our own faces...

These examples I have given are perhaps unfair—they are extracts from films of Shakespeare, and not plans for entire productions of his work.

Much has been left unsaid in this article. No mention, for instance, of the British Council films of excerpts from Shakespeare's plays, which have been specially designed for students overseas. Nor of the academic possibilities—of the idea of filming performances of all the plays in the most exact possible replica of the theatres of Shakespeare's day. This enormous scheme would be designed, of course, for the Shakespeare addict, not just for the general public, though many of the plays might serve both purposes, if we remember how vividly the camera could reveal the close, intimate relation between player and audience in Shakespeare's day.

Basil Wright

Edgar Anstey on the

CZECHOSLOVAK FILM FESTIVAL

This article consists of excerpts from a recent BBC Broadcast

IN ALL my film-viewing in Prague I have seen only one film which seemed unsuitable for export. My own opinion—for what it's worth—is that the average level of Czechoslovak feature film production is certainly not below that of Britain or America, and is superior to such Soviet work as we have been able to see lately. Now this I recognize is a bold claim. It doesn't mean that Czechoslovak films yet include a great work of genius. What it does mean is that their total product includes little or none of the banal, third-rate nonsense which still forms an appreciable part of American and British output.

During the course of the Festival British cinema-goers have been able to see *Warriors of Faith*, *Stolen Frontier*, *Men without Wings*, *The Warning*, *The Strike*, *Dead among the Living*, and *The Violin and the Dream*, together with shorts ranging from the delightfully eerie mystical legend *Animals and Brigands* to the fine dignity of *Church of St George*—a documentary of ecclesiastical architecture full of the national spirit of Czechoslovakia.

General Conclusion

It is not my place here to review these films in detail. But I do want to draw certain general conclusions as to overall content and style and I think the best way to do this is to tell you about the most memorable thing that happened to me during my last visit to Czechoslovakia. We had been invited to a small town called Duba, which had been chosen for the premiere of *Warriors of Faith* because it was from here that Rohac, the hero of the film came five hundred years ago. A party went from Prague for the occasion, led by Mr Kopecky, Minister of Information. One part of the ceremony was the re-naming of a street in honour of the film and, after the speeches had been made, the official party moved off through the crowds towards the hotel for the rest of the proceedings. Now the Minister of Information is a native of this district, and it was not long before he had been halted by shouts of greeting from men and women who once had been his schoolfellows. They started to ask him questions about the state of the world and the hope of peace. He began to answer them—slowly and carefully at first—in terms which I recognized, when they were translated by a neighbour, as being homely and yet shrewd and realistic. The discussion—on a level of man to man equality with no obsequiousness or timid deference—went on and became more and more complicated, and more and more lively and stimulating. It began there in the street and went on during most of the rest of the day. From time to time, Mr Kopecky would disappear from the formalities and later would be found at the centre of a knot of eager, inquiring citizens of Duba.

Here was in fact a Minister of Information taking advantage of a fleeting opportunity to do his job, not through his staff, or through the Press, or through the radio, but directly with the people of whom he was a leader and yet a servant. It was, as I said, a memorable experience.

Democratic Realism

But what has this to do with Czechoslovak films? The answer I think is that the average

Czechoslovak film demonstrates a particular kind of democratic realism. Their films are conspicuously free from social or indeed intellectual distinction between groups and levels of people. They really seem to begin with the assumption that all men are equal. Then, as to realism. Even in *Warriors of Faith* where some people have found the plot over-complicated and difficult to follow, few of you will quarrel with the background of medieval town and castle and with the costumes or decoration. Certainly in the films of war and occupation like *Stolen Frontier* and *Men without Wings*, the settings are documentary in manner. For example, the industrial sequences of *Men without Wings* were shot in a real factory and not in the studio. Perhaps without immodesty, we may claim to find signs here of British influence, probably transmitted by Czechoslovak film-makers who worked here during the war.

Another quality of Czechoslovak films is the readiness of characters to discuss in serious adult terms the underlying political or philosophical implications of their story. The raising of such serious issues in the dialogue is not regarded with the horror that it would arouse in many British and American film distributors and exhibitors. Mind you this sometimes lets in a bit of direct propaganda—generally, and naturally enough perhaps in this nationalized industry, against the Germans and the Hungarians. But the propaganda is never over-obtrusive.

Now, since we've got to it, what about nationalization? Whatever the dangers of propaganda and censorship which it may bring, nationalization does mean that the making and distributing of films is not merely a matter of commercial relationships between different financial groups each concerned with its own section of the industry; instead the nationalized industry can concentrate as a whole on providing a public service. And I particularly noticed amongst our visitors that whilst there was a great deal of discussion about what is a good film and what isn't, the question of what the public wanted—of box-office—was never once raised. For the very simple reason that the film-makers did not see themselves as being a different kind of person from the people who go to the cinema. If a film was good—and they meant good as art and entertainment, not as propaganda—then the public would like it. And that is a theory which no one has yet succeeded in disproving—at any rate to me (provided always of course that public judgment is not deliberately unbalanced in advance, as it so frequently is here, by enormously expensive publicity campaigns designed to persuade the public that a film known by its makers to be bad, is in fact good).

I should like to speak briefly about other aspects of the Festival besides the showing of films. And I am not referring to the hospitality provided by the Foreign Office, the Rank organization and other film industry bodies. Of perhaps more importance have been lectures given by people like Mr Nerval, the leading poet of Czechoslovakia, on 'Poetry in the Film', by Mr Brichta on 'The History of the Czechoslovak Film', by Dr Hejny of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education on 'The Scientific Film', and by

Mr Kolda on 'The International Distribution of Films'. Some of these lectures have been given for the public, some for specialized groups in the British film industry. But each of them has represented a valuable exchange of experience. Then the documentary makers of both countries have got together to plan an agreement for the exchange of films and facilities. And the critics to examine common problems of critical standards, and resistance to unfair influence, be it political or commercial.

From the British side we have heard Mr George Tomlinson, Minister of Education, speak on the importance of the documentary film in the international field. Mr Herbert Morrison has wittily drawn attention to the great moderation the Labour Government is showing in—as yet—proposing no nationalization for the British film industry. Mr Fielinger, speaking for Czechoslovakia, has reminded us in moving terms of the close bonds built up both on the personal and the national level between our two countries during the war period. Indeed one has not, I think, been over-optimistic in feeling that there does exist on both sides a deep determination that this cultural exchange shall be the first of many—exemplified best perhaps by the presence of a group of three British Cabinet Ministers at two of the Festival's ceremonies.

Results

What does this Festival mean for the man and woman in the street (or in the cinema)? To begin with, it's surely an advantage that those people responsible for art and the communication of ideas in all countries, should meet to see whether in their chosen calling they may not find a common interest and a common aim which have escaped the statesmen and the politicians. And for cinema audiences, the Festival surely can be regarded as a step in the direction of a wider and fairer exchange of films with foreign countries. It's no coincidence that a most encouraging agreement for the distribution of British films in Czechoslovakia should have been concluded during the period of the Festival. Let us hope that those cinema-goers who have seen and enjoyed the Czechoslovak films at the New Gallery, the Glasgow Cosmo and other cinemas will do what they can, individually and through any organizations they belong to, to encourage the distribution of the films on a normal commercial basis. Foreign dialogue undoubtedly is a handicap, even with sub-titles, but this can be more than balanced by the atmosphere and feeling of a foreign country which its films carry. Beyond their story, their plot, there is a background, an atmosphere, a philosophy, if you like, by which a country can communicate its qualities and characteristics to the world more effectively than through any other medium. It may do so honestly or dishonestly, and this must be taken care of by the film-makers. But if they do an honest job—and most of them wish to do nothing else—and if the public insists on seeing their work, then the work of the film-maker in all countries may well prove to be the most important means we have of breaking down the international barriers which grow out of ignorance and suspicion.

HISTORY ON FILM

By Peter Baylis

THE Pathé Company have produced a newsreel twice a week since the early years of the century and a cinemagazine once a week since the early twenties. And each week from home and overseas, the News and the Pictorial gather in some 8,000 feet of film. After their all-too-brief tour of the cinema circuits, the reels and the mass of unused material are transferred to the Library. Occasionally, odd sections of film are dusted off to be incorporated in a biography of a departed personality, and at the close of each year the News Editors dig down for bits for their review of the past 12 months. The remainder of the film shot, in all probability, never again sees the light of the projector arc. Here, then, is material unlimited. From it films can be compiled on every possible subject—politics, sport, aviation, scientific progress, everything from international affairs since World War I, to 40 years of football.

The first film we put in production was a 4-reel compilation for theatrical distribution. One of the most popular series of feature broadcasts has been the Scrap Book programmes written by Leslie Baily. We considered that if, in some way, we could combine the two techniques, radio and film, we might be able to achieve an illusion of a past era which would surpass in nostalgia anything which has yet reached the screen. We called in Leslie Baily who enthused over the idea. The main question was—just how far back should we go. It had to be far enough back to provide colourful contrast with the present day, and yet not so far back that the better part of the cinema audience could not enjoy a fair modicum of nostalgia. Finally, we decided on 1922—just a quarter of a century ago—a year strong enough in post-war influence to invite interesting and significant comparison with 1947. And it so happened that 1922 was chock-full of exactly what we wanted; history and nostalgia unlimited. It was a year of international unrest, the fall of a British government, civil war in Ireland, the first days of the BBC, Suzanne Lenglen and Jack Hobbs, Bonar Law and Bottomley, Sarah Bernhardt and Stanley Lupino, 'normalcy' and night-clubs, Felix the Cat and 'Beaver'!

So, step by step, *Scrap Book for 1922* is coming together. It is a job calling for prolonged research and infinite patience, but we are convinced that something different will be the result. So much for our attempts to slip into the now fairly distant past; but what of the time that is only now slipping into history?

We had in mind a film record, in topicality somewhere between a newsreel and a *March of Time*, which would present the events of a given period with some semblance of explanation. Because of the time which must inevitably elapse during production, our period had to be of some considerable duration. So we cut our cloth to a one reel quarterly, which would be entitled *Summing Up*. With one eye on the schools, we chose as our subject international affairs. This was to include, also, those events which can be considered as having distinct international significance as, for example, the international search for a lost Dakota in the Alps, or, an American coal strike affecting production vital to world reconstruction. The whole was to be an inter-

national review which would be a solid plug for world unity. The film's immediate use was to provide background and atmosphere for teen-age lessons on current affairs. Its long-term use would be as a permanent historical record.

The material with which we had to work had very distinct limitations. Often coverage consisted of only a handful of shots and frequently these shots were cut extremely short. A style of commentary and presentation had therefore to be adopted, which would tell the story in the simplest possible terms. The commentary could not expand or expound at will—it had to be confined to exceedingly short bursts. Optical effects we shunned, because, as we were working on dupes, there would have been an unbearable loss of quality. To punctuate the film and to provide breathing spaces, we adopted the *March of Time* style of continuity titles (which, on reflection, seemed to be used by *March of Time* for exactly the same reasons!)

When the first two editions of *Summing Up* reached the schools, complete with teaching notes, we invited criticism. We certainly got it. Sequences were too short, commentaries were either too newsy or too emotional, we linked events on film which had no real link in real life,

and so on, and so on. But, by and large, the reception has been encouraging. We would like to extend the use of *Summing Up* as far into the non-theatrical field as possible, and, maybe, into the theatrical field. Here, however, arise questions of release and topicality. When does delayed news material cease to be out-of-date news and become an historical record?

In the dramatic form of presentation adopted by *Summing Up*, I admit to indulgence in a pet theory with regard to instruction by film. I consider that instruction on history and current affairs can best be achieved by dramatization; that by using forceful commentary, appropriate music and polished editing, we can show children and students that the events taking place around us are as dramatic and as exciting as anything that Hollywood can contrive. We wanted to impress upon them that Trieste is not just a spot on a map, a name to be bandied about over conference tables, but is a living community of men, women and children. We wanted to show them that an atom blast at Bikini, a conference in Moscow, a civil war in China and a strike in Balham were all part of one great story—the story of man's fight for existence and world unity.

AUDIENCE REACTIONS IN SCHOOLS

THREE new Road Safety films for children, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, have just been released by Petroleum Films Bureau. They aim to be something more than the usual traffic-light and careful-crossing type of film, but both their makers and the distributors regard them as something in the nature of an experiment albeit an experiment thought out with care and a sense of responsibility. They endeavour to use the child's love of fantasy to teach him good road-behaviour—to teach him more through his imagination and his love of make-believe than by dinning a concrete idea into his head until it loses meaning.

Adults vary greatly in their reactions to these films—some think they are too fantastic; others that they are not fantastic enough. Some think they will be above the heads of children; others that they talk down too much. But the important thing is—how do children react? They have been made for children and what matters is whether they influence their behaviour in the desired way.

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations was called in, and the suggestion made that an audience reaction test should be carried out amongst some schoolchildren. The Local Education Authorities in Harrow were very co-operative and made arrangements for two of their schools to receive a team of investigators.

As *Playing in the Road* was not finished at the time, only *Puddle Muddle Riddle* (for the seven and eight year olds) and *The Ballad of the Battered Bicycle* (nine and ten year olds) were tried out. The classes, of about forty children and providing different age groups, were split into four sections of ten children each. Section A did free drawing for twenty minutes, then saw the film, then drew again for another twenty minutes. It was hoped to find something of the content of the films being brought out in the second lot of drawings. These pictures were all stored, with the rest of the test material, to be examined later.

Section B, with two observers, did an oral story completion. One observer started them on a story; then each child in turn added bits to the story as he or she liked. This observer kept the

ball rolling and made general notes on the behaviour of the group. The other observer had the job of taking down everything which was said by all the children in detail. After twenty minutes the story was left in mid air while the film was shown and then another story was started which had some parallel meaning to that of the film. Again, every word and action, as far as possible, was noted down.

Section C in the three older age groups did a written story completion both before and after the film. These stories were taken away and examined later. (In the case of the seven year olds Section C did the same as Section B.)

Section D was the play group. They went out of doors with one observer to direct the play and another two to do all the writing of the conversations and general actions of the group. It was suggested to the children that they should make up a road game and play at crossing and being buses and cars. After they had seen the film it was suggested to them that they might like to act it out and to put in anything which they felt might improve the film. Again, everything they did or said was noted down.

Each film was shown to the four sections at the same time—that is, to the seven year olds Sections A, B, C, and D, and so on through all the age groups. As the schools were large ones it was possible to have an 'average' class in each age—to avoid either the very bright children or the dullards. During each showing of the films all the observers were on the alert to note down the laughs, the bits which held the attention best, the bits which were obviously boring and the bits which seemed to be beyond the children and during which they started to fidget.

The next day every child who had seen either of the films was asked to write an essay on the film and these essays were collected by the teachers and sent on to the Institute to add to the huge piles of drawings, stories and notes which were already assembled there for interpretation.

The results will take some while to work out, and until that is done it is of course impossible to draw any well-founded conclusion.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Chasing the Blues. DATA Films for the Cotton Board. Music: Jack Parnell's Quartet. Dancers: Alan Baker, Donald Britten. Optical Superimposition: Studio Film Laboratories. Distribution: T and Non-T in Lancashire. 6 minutes.

Whenever films are made to propagate policies there arises the difficulty of flushing the shy living things that lurk in the undergrowth of official and semi-official phraseology. Typewriters chatter through the Hampstead night as directors and script-writers devise methods of making columns of statistics walk and talk, or of imparting attractive flesh-tints to a stack of white papers. When their devices are successful, which is not always by any means, it is an occasion for warm congratulation.

Chasing the Blues undertakes the task of encouraging cotton-mill managers to pay more attention to the welfare and comfort of their workers, and giving them a few ideas on how to go about it. The DATA technicians have avoided ponderous exhortations and wordy argument. Instead they have produced a kind of film ballet which makes its points almost entirely in music and movement. The technique derives, partly at any rate, from Len Lye's abstract film posters of the 1930s, and it fulfils its purpose to admiration. Experiments of this kind are as welcome as they are rare, and it is to be hoped that both sponsors and producers will explore further the land of fantasy. They will find it an invaluable base in their war against the Great Ho-Hum.

Puddle Muddle Riddle. Seven League for PFB. Distribution: PFB. 12 mins.

Playing in the Road. Public Relationship Films for PFB. Distribution: PFB. 12 mins.

The Ballad of the Battered Bicycle. Seven League for PFB. Distribution: PFB. 8 mins.

In this country the production of entertainment films for children is still in its infancy and little is yet known about the effectiveness of this medium for conveying ideas. The Petroleum Films Bureau is therefore to be congratulated upon having sponsored a series of experimental story films on road safety, each having been made for a particular age group.

It is not easy for an adult to appraise films made for children. They must clearly be of a slower tempo than those for adults, and are therefore liable to seem boring to us. The humour must be broad and rather obvious, and not of the type to which we are used to responding. The camera must move quietly and deliberately, making its points explicitly rather than by reference to symbols, significant close-ups, cross-cutting, etc. The children and grown-ups must appear as they do to children. But having said that we have said very little, and the only real test of such films is the influence they have on behaviour. We understand that the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations is undertaking some research on children's reactions to these films. This should yield some extremely interesting results.

Of these three films, the least successful was the one designed for the youngest children, *Playing in the Road*. From the adult point of view it is a delightful film—well shot and neatly edited, amusing and interesting. But it is very doubtful

whether small children would follow much of it. It moves very quickly, the dialogue is sophisticated and spoken rapidly, and the points are emphasized too subtly. The most suitable film is the one for children of over 10 years, *The Ballad of the Battered Bicycle*. The commentary is in the style of Stanley Holloway, who speaks it. It is the tale of a boy who, breaking every rule of the road, rides his bike to its death. It is a clear and simple story, straightforwardly told, and should appeal to the juvenile road-hog.

Puddle Muddle Riddle is difficult to assess, since its humour is not intended to appeal to grown-ups and it depends on humour to make its point. It is the story of Puddle Muddle, where there were no traffic rules, and of the various types of rules devised by the grotesque Town Council when the chaos became unbearable. Eventually some sensible people step in and work out the rules we use today, and they appeal to the children to co-operate in carrying them out. There seems every reason to believe that the main point will get over to the children, even if they do not follow the transition from the Puddle Muddians to the sensible folk who put everything right.

Whatever their result, the making of these films was a step forward. We want more of every type of film for children, but we especially want more research and experiment into the entertainment film for juveniles. Is it asking too much for the Ministry of Education to give some consideration to this question alongside its work on educational films?

A Power in the Land. World Wide for Electrical Trades Union. Producer: Ralph Bond. Director: Terry Bishop. Camera: Arthur Graham. Distribution: Full-theatrical. GFD. 40 mins.

This film has been made in two versions, a three reeler for the theatres, with an extra reel to be added for showing throughout the trade union movement. The main body of the film deals with the uses of electricity. Through the membership index of a trade union office we are introduced to the work that has to be done in electrical supply undertakings, in factories making electrical fittings, in steelworks where the machinery is electrically controlled, on board ship, etc. Before our eyes pass electric irons and cookers, generators and scientific timing machines, X-ray apparatus, an encephalograph, and finally a cyclotron (with a brief introduction to atom-splitting). The commentator works up to a high-sounding peroration on all these marvels of electricity, to be interrupted by an ordinary electrician doing his everyday job repairing somebody else's wireless set, with a timely 'A fat lot of use you'd be without me'. It is a very necessary reminder. The ETU has a couple of hundred thousand members; on their work and skill depends the supply of many services we take for granted.

The extra reel gives a brief description of the ETU, its organization as a trade union, how it functions, and the wide range of activities it is concerned with. It seems a pity that this should be the section which is omitted from the theatrical version. It is the general public, rather than the trade union movement, that needs to be informed of these things, particularly as the film does a

good job of explaining union organization.

The film is competently made, though rather slow-moving at times. One could have wished, in the theatrical version, for more emphasis on people, on the electricians themselves. The fact that the film is to get theatrical distribution is particularly important. It will be the first time a trade union viewpoint about a major industry will be presented on the cinema screens of this country.

Out of the Ruins. Canadian National Film Board for UNRRA. Distribution: N-T. CFL. 30 mins.

This film made in 1945 tells the story of the relief work undertaken immediately following the liberation of Greece. Today it might well be written off as out of date, were it not for the fact that its implications are profoundly topical.

As its title suggests, *Out of the Ruins* provides a picture of the devastation of Greece and of the pitiful situation of its population at the time of the liberation. Such scenes are still salutary, even after our own wartime experiences and the discomforts of the recent fuel crisis. The work of UNRRA makes an inspiring theme, with its welcome by the ordinary people, its preoccupation with providing the homely but important things of life (such as mules), and its concern to draw the Greek people fully into the work of reconstruction and replanning.

The director has made the most of the opportunities provided. The Greek peasants are brought close to us and we are impressed by their courage and their simple dignity. The beauties of the countryside—surely a sore temptation to the cameraman—have been utilized without artiness or artificiality. There is a very effective and moving sequence depicting the Resistance in symbolic terms. As it stands, this film is a fitting tribute to all that was best in UNRRA and to the ideals of disinterested relief which have received such setbacks since its premature demise.

But Greece is the centre of world political battles and is torn by civil war. Any good film must therefore be expected to reflect in some way the underlying reasons for this. Within the limits set by the subject *Out of the Ruins* does this. It shows for example, the contrast between the standard of living of the rich and of the poor, the expensive shops crammed with luxury foods while the mass of the people live on, or over, the starvation line. It shows the demands for democracy of the ordinary people. It shows foreign troops on patrol in the heart of Athens. We can draw our own conclusions from these facts:

The real topicality of this film lies, however, in what it does not show. When it was shot it was apparently still possible to be optimistic about the future of Greece. The film breathes confidence about the reconstruction of the country, about the participation of the common people in this work, and about the re-establishment of the cultural and democratic heritage of Greece. Yet, two years later, with UNRRA at an end, civil war raging, and thousands of the ordinary folk exiled, imprisoned or seeking sanctuary in the mountains, one can only feel shaken and shamed by the frustration of all the ideals and plans so enthusiastically portrayed in the film. The Canadian Film Board have turned out a good film, but they have done more than that. Perhaps inadvertently they have challenged the consciences of the freedom loving peoples of the world.

Very Dangerous. Sixteen to Twenty-six. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada and Crawley Studios for the Division of VD Control, Department of National Health and Welfare. Each 2 reels. 16 mm. colour-sound. Distribution: Canadian National Film Board.

These two colour films from Canada are a useful addition to existing films on venereal disease. Using the device of a lecture by a doctor, each film shows the cause, symptoms, method of transmission and cure of gonorrhoea and syphilis; *Sixteen to Twenty-six* dealing with the diseases in women, *Very Dangerous* in men. Given this method of presentation little fault can be found with either film. Both are straightforward competent productions, although some of the diagram work, particularly that showing the incidence of VD compared with other common diseases, could be improved upon; and the colour in places is unnaturally lurid.

From a propaganda point of view both films present the same combination of medical fact and moral exhortation, which is followed by VD publicity in this country. Whether this line will ever achieve any reduction in the incidence of the diseases is too complicated a question to be discussed here; at the same time it must be said that surely the time has now come for an approach to the subject from a more positive point of view. The wartime increase of VD, which still continues, is only one example of a complex breakdown of the social system, a breakdown which shows itself in increasing restlessness and dissatisfaction with work, in a rise of juvenile delinquency and armed robbery, in an erratic birth rate and a phenomenal rise in the number of divorces. Rooted in sociology there is a major task of film making to be undertaken, which will tackle the problems of VD constructively against the whole background of individual and family life in the modern world. Until that time, lecturers in Health Education will find these two films of considerable, if limited, value.

New Faces Come Back. Produced by RCAF Film Unit and National Film Board. 28 mins.

There is one point about this film for which every doctor will be grateful to the producers: that in a subject full of potential 'drama', they have remained calm and dispassionate. For they had a difficult job to do, and the temptation must have been great. Briefly the idea behind the film was to enlist the sympathy and understanding of people in Canada, far from the reality of bombs and their consequences, for those who returned from the war maimed and disfigured.

The film tells how a young Canadian flight engineer, badly burned in a plane crash, is sent to the Plastic Surgery Centre at East Grinstead, for treatment. Here he gets his 'new face'. The course of his recovery is followed and we see how with the help of hospital staff and local friends he gradually returns to a normal attitude to life. In its earlier part the film moves fast. Although in places the continuity wavers, there are moments of skilled film craft which are a pleasure to watch. In the latter part, however, the story breaks down. More than self-consciousness, the haunting fear of these men is sexual failure; the girl's casual refusal to dance, although it symbolizes this fear, does not become a reality. The film fails to convince that Jim would have taken this incident so much to heart, particularly as he does not seem to lack for other outside friends. Even less are we convinced by his subsequent reactions. Sublimation, symbolized

by an interest in music, again appears too simple for reality. The film here never quite makes up its mind what it is trying to get over; eventually it gives up the struggle, Jim recovers his balance and goes happily home, leaving us with the theme that the rest is up to the people there.

The superficiality of the part dealing with the ups and downs of readjustment is a pity, because it inevitably nullifies the permanent value of the film. The problems of psychological adjustment after injury are complex and deep. They cannot be treated in a film which is obviously looking over its shoulder at the theatrical distributors. As events proved, even in this form, it was unacceptable to the theatres, and an opportunity for making a real study of the problem, which would have a permanent value, has been lost. Nevertheless this is a competent film, which has a value for general audiences as an introduction to some of the problems of rehabilitation.

Penicillin in Medical Practice. Realist for COI and Ministry of Health. Producer: John Taylor. Director: J. Massey. Camera: Ronald Gardner. Distribution: CFL. 35 mins.

Technical films for medical audiences are still all too rare, it is therefore the more regrettable to have to record this long awaited film a disappointment. Undoubtedly its value would have been much greater if it could have been released before Penicillin was generally available. Today when all doctors have had experience of its use, much of the point has been lost. Even so it is difficult to understand what it was hoped to achieve with the film in this form.

In theory the shape is sound. From a beautiful opening shot of the mould in growth, the film reviews in succession the properties of penicillin, including the agents by which it is inactivated, shows the form and methods of administration and the limitations of use. The latter part shows some of the principal applications of penicillin to medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, venereal and skin infections. This is no superficial treatment, yet at the end we have learned little and will remember less.

The fact is that this is one of those omnibus films that confuse the mind with a mass of material and give no time for reflection and absorption; yet at the same time in covering too much, leaves much unanswered. This is the more annoying because much of the detail is concerned with hospital treatment and surgical techniques, which are unnecessary and which could have been omitted to allow the inclusion of the simpler practical information and guidance for use needed by the general practitioner in his daily work. Of many omissions, the most serious is a lack of stress on the dangers of underdosage. Undoubtedly there is much here that is useful—the sequence showing continuous intramuscular drip, for example, is excellent, and tips, like the inclusion of Novocaine to minimize the pain of injection, invaluable—but these tend to get lost in the remaining material. The film unit have been badly advised. This was a subject calling for a fundamental analysis of aim and purpose, and should clearly have been dealt with in a series of films.

On the technical side the film is in general much below the standard we expect from this unit. While many of the difficulties are inherent in present day 16 mm. colour production, a slower tempo through a more liberal use of cut aways and camera movement would have helped the method of presentation.

Modern Guide to Health. By Halas and Batchelor for COI and Ministry of Health. Producer and Director: John Halas. Script: Joy Batchelor. Camera: Percy Wright. Distribution: T and Non-T CFL. 10 mins.

A guide to *Health*: A tall order in ten minutes. Forget the title; here are some first-rate tips on good posture, fresh air and exercise, sensible clothing and sound sleep, presented in a simple style which contrives to be both instructional and entertaining. Elementary, but none the worse for that. We have had too many overstuffed films. Cartoon technique proved its value for health education in the armed forces during the war. In a world engaged on forgetting all war-time lessons this film is an encouragement. But why is it not labelled No 1? A planned series is needed.

Scabies, 1946. Merlin for Ministry of Health. Direction: Robin Carruthers. Production: Michael Hankinson. Camera: H. N. Edwell. Distribution: CFL. 34 mins.

This re-edited version of the Scabies film made for medical audiences in 1943 is a considerable improvement on the original. With the removal of the unconvincing sync dialogue sequences, and the insertion of a new section showing the relative merits of various sarcopticides, the film now presents a completely satisfying account of scabies infestation. Now for a film on the louse, please.

Food Manufacture. Production: World Wide for Army Kinema Corporation. Producer: James Carr. Director: Graham Cutts. Camera: Ronnie Anscombe. Story: Ted Willis. Distribution: CFL and all services. 27 mins.

This is one of a series of films portraying life in various key British industries for the guidance of members of the forces returning to civilian jobs. The food industry bristles with difficulties from the point of view of the film maker. It is a medley of craft processes, and machine minding, poorly organized and indifferently paid. Despite its social usefulness it is not an industry which is likely to attract the ambitious or enterprising worker.

World Wide have been well advised to use a severely factual approach—and it was good to hear the commentator facing up to realities. He explained frequently that prospects of promotion were poor and that in certain sections of the industry there was little opportunity of learning a trade. He was brutally frank about the low level of wages and the monotony of much of the work, but this is all as it should be in a film which sets out to present a true picture of an industry.

In this series there have been a dozen or so films depicting various industries where labour is required. If they are all as painstakingly honest as this one the average chap in the forces should have found them very helpful in choosing his future job. On the other hand, one can imagine his confusion if each film had tried to present its subject as the most alluring and lucrative industry.

This review may give the impression that the film is dull and earnest—on the contrary, it is interesting, lively and amusing. It is well and imaginatively shot, briskly edited and the music is apt and wittily arranged. The film can profitably be shown in adult education, to school-leavers, and to social scientists as well as being of interest to film society audiences.

LE CANARD ENCHAÎNÉ has kindly given us permission to reprint this interesting article on

MONSIEUR VERDOUX or CHARLIE CHAPLIN versus THE REST

New York—April

I HAVE just been seeing *Monsieur Verdoux*, the new Charlie Chaplin film. Or should I say the new Chaplin film, for the little man with the bowler hat and bamboo cane isn't in it? Instead, there is a new character, a very elegant gentleman with silvery hair. The moustache alone reminds us of the old Charlie.

The story of *Monsieur Verdoux*—a *Comedy of Murders* is simple. For 30 years, Verdoux, a humble French bank clerk, has looked after other people's money. One day he gets the sack. The worm turns. Verdoux has an invalid wife and a small son. He must have money. To get it, he commits bigamy with rich women whom he immediately kills off. Posing first as an explorer, then as an Army captain, and finally as an antique dealer, he seduces his female victims with a flowery and passionate eloquence. Don Juan lives again—metempsychosed into Crippen!

And then one day Monsieur Verdoux's house of cards collapses. His invalid wife dies; so does his son. He is hammered on the Stock Exchange. Sick of it all, he throws in his hand, and gives himself up, to justice and the hangman.

Is there any comedy? Yes, of course. There is the scene where he counts the takings from the wives he has killed, wetting his finger and flicking the notes rapidly as bank clerks do, the world over.

There is the scene when he makes desperate efforts to drown one of his wives, and it is she who finally rescues him from a watery grave.

And another, when he makes a passionate avowal of love—with a cup of tea in his hand.

But these moments are rare. There are not many laughs. On the contrary, it is a film of such bitterness and melancholy that it took my breath away.

What have the American critics said?

'We just can't recognize our old friend Charlie.'

'What has happened to the little guy in the bowler hat?'

'Way down, it's the same Charlie, but this time he's really old, grown disillusioned and cynical. No more moonlight and roses. Things have got too tough.'

To which Monsieur Verdoux bitterly replies 'The world is a jungle.'

When Monsieur Verdoux appears before the judge who condemns him to death, he makes a little speech. 'The prosecution has credited me with intelligence. Thank you. For 30 years I used this intelligence of mine for honest ends. And then suddenly, one day, they didn't want it. You call me a criminal? On the contrary, I'm only an amateur. The mass murder of women and children is done scientifically these days.' And he adds mockingly—'See you soon, gentlemen, very soon.'

A reporter who comes to interview him in his cells suggests that 'Crime doesn't pay.' 'Don't you believe it,' says Verdoux, 'a great many criminals become millionaires. I'm just unlucky.'

A priest visits him in prison. 'God have pity on your soul,' he says. Monsieur Verdoux smiles—

'Why not,' he says, 'after all, it belongs to him.'

In this extraordinary film, there is no sweetness or light and no hope. The characters are ugly, greedy and quarrelsome. The women are fools, naïve fools, avaricious fools. The most sympathetic character is Monsieur Verdoux himself, the murderer, the Bluebeard.

As in all Chaplin films, there is a young girl. But this time the young girl is a thief, the mistress of an armaments king. ('That ought to have been my racket,' murmurs Monsieur Verdoux.)

Do you remember the last shot in *Modern Times*? Backlit, Charlie walks down a long road, hand in hand with Paulette Goddard. Monsieur Verdoux walks alone, between two policemen, alone to his death, and it is almost as though he is saying 'At last.'

Do you remember *The Circus*, *The Gold Rush*, and a dozen other films in which Charlie timidly and adoringly makes love to pre-Raphaelite young girls? Monsieur Verdoux whispers apt clichés to middle-aged women, with an eye on their bank balance.

If this film distressed and saddened me, it is not because of Monsieur Verdoux, who after all is no more than a symbol of our time, a character who amateurishly attempts to compete with the atomic big shots. No, it's not because of him. It is because of Charles Chaplin.

For if ever a film reflected the bitterness and despair of a human spirit, this film does. How blind the American critics are! 'The film is amusing,' they have said, or 'bewildering'. They have uttered their pious hopes that Charlie will be back with his bowler hat in his 'next'. None of them say 'There speaks a man's soul.'

Why is Monsieur Verdoux so lonely, so anti-social, so shatteringly cynical? Because he is Charles Chaplin.

The reason is not far to seek. No matter what American paper you open, for years Chaplin has been the butt of all the bigots, hypocrites, jingoes and nitwits of the entire American continent.

Columnists who can find nothing to say, because they are dead from the neck up, can always attack Chaplin, and throw mud at one of the greatest artists of our time. Chaplin is sensitive, Chaplin is creative, Chaplin will never hunt with the hounds. Down with Chaplin!

'Are you a Communist, Mr Chaplin?' 'What did you do during the war?' 'Why won't you have anything to do with American politics?' 'Why have you never become an American citizen, after having lived here for 30 years?' 'What's your opinion of the USSR?' 'Why? How? When? Where?'

These are only a few of the questions with which he was bombarded at a press conference the other day. He replied: 'I have never become an American because I am not a nationalist. Politics don't interest me. I pay taxes here, despite the fact that 70 per cent of my income comes from abroad. The USSR? In my opinion, the Russians fought bravely during the war. If you think that makes me a Communist, well and good.'

The Press conference went on, becoming more

and more like a court of justice, with Chaplin in the dock. 'Mr Chaplin, in the name of our Catholic comrades, who fell in the war ...'

'Mr Chaplin, you have taken our money and yet you refuse to take out nationalization papers ...'

A pack of hounds, and they never let up. And the voice of Monsieur Verdoux echoes—'The world is a jungle.'

Before the conference ended, an intelligent critic with a genuine love for film, asked the following question—'Mr Chaplin, what is your opinion of a country, which, in the name of liberty, expects an artist to account for his beliefs, his private life, the manner in which he conducts his private business, and subjects him to a press campaign which amounts to public blackmail?'

Chaplin looked at him a moment and said two words—'Thank you.'

While all this was going on, and the dogs were baying at his heels, a telegraph boy came in, tired, blasé, chewing gum. He delivered a telegram to somebody and, raising his eyes, suddenly saw, in the middle of the room, a most distinguished and elegant gentleman with white hair. He stared, thunderstruck, then bolted out of the room. And through the closed door we heard his voice, full of disbelief and delight, shouting—'Say, it's Charlie!'

Translated from an article in 'Le Canard Enchaîné' dated April 23rd, 1947, and signed 'Donald Ducky.'

COI BULLETIN

Monthly Review. No. 5. February 1947. Issued by Information Department, Films Division, COI.

COI Films Division should make a point of circulating their house-magazine to contracting units. This is issue number five, and the first time your reviewer had ever heard of it. Baffled producers, directors and production managers, for whom the letters COI spell only 'financial problems', might have their morale uplifted by the knowledge that enlightened comment of this kind (yes, actually about film, not merely about paperwork and figures) regularly percolates to the darkest recesses of the Central Office. Here in this issue are a review of the 'Factual Film', a report from Paris by Helen de Mouilpied, notes on recent productions, on film literature, on what the studios are doing, and, as a tailpiece, E to G of a 'Glossary of Film Technical Terms and Abbreviations'. Carry on COI! We may not always love you, but this is beyond reproach.

CORRECTION BY LETTER

SIR: There is a little conspiracy of identical errors in your April-May issue. On p. 88, in the review of the film *Instruments of the Orchestra*, we read of Britten's 'fifteen variations and fugue', and on p. 94 the observation is made again (by another writer?) that 'the film presents 15 variations and a fugue on a Purcell theme.'

Actually the film presents 13 variations, for (1) flutes and piccolo, (2) oboes, (3) clarinets, (4) bassoons, (5) first and second violins, (6) violas, (7) cellos, (8) double-basses, (9) harp, (10) horns, (11) trumpets, (12) trombone and bass tuba, and (13) percussion. These are succeeded by the fugue, and preceded by six statements of the theme, for (1) full orchestra, (2) wood-wind, (3) brass, (4) strings, (5) percussion, and (6) full orchestra again.

Yours, etc.,

HANS KELLER

WORM'S EYE VIEW OR A POSTWAR RECRUIT LOOKS AT DOCUMENTARY

By MICHAEL CLARKE

LOOKING back at a year in the industry and a year's issues of *DNL*, it occurs to me that the documentary movement is inexplicable and confused. When I read about documentary in books and articles, years ago, I learned how vital a medium for public information and social improvement it could be. I realized that our films could, in the crudest terms, be a weapon on the side of truth. I also learned that one of the chief tasks of the documentary worker was to negotiate wider manufacture and better distribution of the product, in order that the broadest social effect might be realized.

What do I find? From the old guard, all too often merely complaints—that the industry is commercialized, that £17 a week is somehow worse than £5, that there is no longer the 'spirit' of the old days. This at a time when more documentaries are commissioned and made than ever before in peacetime.

It isn't sense; but of course it is understandable. For with the wider use of factual films, there have entered the industry many technicians who have no sense of dedication. But it is not their fault that they don't feel like missionaries, nor does it matter if, as often, they are technically very efficient. There isn't any more the feeling of a happy band of pilgrims; the party is too large. Nor is there a large quantity of films with a radical social message being made. (Not that there ever was; but they are the ones that people remember.)

To this extent, the spirit of documentary must have changed; and it is true that the movement is completely disorganized, if indeed it is still a movement at all. I don't think this is because it is too large; for there is still a number of technicians who ally to a love of film the conviction that human health, happiness and values are supremely important, and that our medium can help to fight for their recognition. But many of these people have entered the movement since 1939; they find that documentary is shapeless, and that there is no channel through which their energies, enthusiasms and varied abilities can be canalized.

Most of the complaints about the present, and the esoteric comparisons with 'the old GPO days', come from those whose long service and experience should have led them to keep the movement on its feet. It is these senior technicians of the movement who, I suggest, are responsible for its decline into individualism; it was their task to give leadership, to develop their juniors, or rather so to encourage them that their best talents were matured to the service of documentary. There used to be, one hears, a tradition of this kind; but nowadays most of the people whose task it is are doing other work. Public relations, propagation of the documentary gospels, all the related jobs are vitally important, and must not be obscured. But if they mean that real connection with film-making and film-makers is abandoned, then those who perform them lose their touch; and leadership is reduced to the sour complaint that things are no longer as they were. It is no coincidence that most sense is usually spoken by those of the first generation who still make films.

However discrete the documentary movement

appears to be, there is still a common factor connecting most of its units. That factor is the technicians who believe actively in the original purposes of the medium. But, with so many people employed, it is no longer possible to preserve and build on that unity by chance meetings in the pub; if we are to fight what Grierson, I believe, called the 'carpet-slipper mentality', we must find something more suitable than the *Highlander* or the *Dog and Duck*. There seems to me to be an important place for an organization catering solely for documentary workers; we are in a period of great change, in which we have to adjust our methods and objectives; at the same time, there are numbers of junior technicians who need to be developed and made familiar with the movement in which they work. No existing organization can achieve this. The FDFU, with the chance of a lifetime, nevertheless remains almost solely a producers' body, albeit a valuable one; the ACT has a far wider scope; while Film Centre takes no advantage of its power and opportunity. At the moment, *DNL* is the only point of contact for documentary workers; and you can't belong to a magazine. Let us therefore, since the doyens of the movement have done nothing to crystallize it, attempt to focus what energies and talents we can assemble in a new body of documentary workers, at once social and professional. Of course, you cannot achieve

miracles simply by forming an organization; but it does provide a basis on which to work.

It is at the same time very necessary to clear up the large question of our attitude to the sort of films that are being made. It is quite irrelevant to complain that we are no longer producing films of the radical nature of *Today We Live* and the like. The external situation has completely altered, and in fact documentary is doing more useful work in a practical way than it ever has.

One hears the complaint that too much time is spent on making educational films, alleged to be easy meat for the skilled director. Too much time, the miner may think, is spent in hewing coal. Surely it is a tribute to the place documentary has earned for itself that it has been given so much of the responsibility for this work. If we have a progressive aim, it is time for rejoicing when even a part of it comes to be realized. Documentary has called so long and so loud for the use of film in all kinds of education and enlightenment that those who sneer at instructionals become themselves immediately suspect. For now we have actually to perform some of those tasks which, earlier, were only the subject of agitation. Nor is it so easy to make teaching films. In fact, we have to go a long way before establishing a proper theory of educational film; we must study the problems of fore- and background films more deeply, examine the varied needs of special audiences, and find a way of making this important medium cheaper and more accessible.

There is as much a place as ever for the general interpretive film; indeed in some senses we are at an advantage over pre-war days, and are certainly assured of a wider audience. If films

(Continued page 111, top col. 1)

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FILMS ON THE MACHINERY OF DEMOCRACY

By

ALEC SPOOR—PRO, National Association of Local Government Officers

SINCE 1918, practically every man and woman over 21 in Britain has had a vote in a Parliamentary election, and since 1945 the same franchise has been extended to local government elections. We are, therefore, a complete democracy enjoying government of the people, by the people, and for the people, both nationally and locally.

But are we? In 1935, a National Government was elected by the votes of 39 per cent of the electors. In 1945 a Labour Government was elected by the votes of 36 per cent of the electors. On each occasion, one voter in every four neglected to vote. At the county council elections in 1937, only one in 18 of the electors in Devon and only one in 14 of the electors in Cambridgeshire cast their votes. In the six annual elections between 1933 and 1938, the percentages of electors voting for South Cambridgeshire rural district were 8.4, nil, 1.2, nil, 1.5, and nil respectively. And of a sample of 21 boroughs and county boroughs in 1938, the percentages voting ranged between 63.7 and 6.9—with the majority between 10 and 40 per cent. This is scarcely government by the people.

Is it government for the people? It can be that only if the people as a whole know what they can get from government, and see that they get it. But today not one person in a hundred could

tell you what a county, borough or district council does or might do, not one person in a hundred takes any interest in the activities of those bodies, understands the problems they are tackling, or even knows the names of his own councillors. And few councillors try to find out what their constituents think on any particular topic.

In practice, then, our democracy boils down to government of the people, by a handful of the people, for a handful of the people—with the rest entirely uninterested except when the rate demand arrives or the dustman does not.

If we want a real democracy, we must replace this indifference with constructive civic interest. And there, I believe, the film can do much.

The man in the street and the woman in the kitchen are bored by local government because it is big, complicated, and apparently remote from their personal concerns of home, food, children, work, and play. But if you were to take them behind the scenes, show them the new houses being designed and built (and ask them what sort of houses they wanted), the inspectors, analysts and bacteriologists weighing, sampling, and safeguarding their food, the nurses, doctors, and teachers working to give their children a good start in life, the surveyors, traffic experts and police making better roads to speed them to and from work, the council committees planning

community centres, parks, swimming pools and places for play, they would soon be interested—and eager to say what they wanted.

You cannot take them all behind the scenes; but the film can. Jill Craigie, in *The Way We Live*, translated maps into terms of human happiness and showed that even town-planning can stir the blood. Paul Rotha in *Waterworks* takes us along the pipe into the fascinating world of filters, pumps, wells, aqueducts, reservoirs, rivers and clouds that comes into our bathroom every time we turn on the tap, and in *A City Speaks* demonstrates how much the seemingly dull deliberations of the city council mean to the citizens of Manchester, at home and at school, at work and at play. Such films as *Our School*, *Double Thread*, *Life Begins Again*, and *Twenty-four Square Miles*, give their audiences, in John Grierson's phrase, 'the civic eye' through which they can see inside the walls and beneath the surface of governmental activities to the human values behind.

But we need many more such films—films that, to quote Grierson again, 'can strike a living spark across the gap between the administration and the citizen', films that will elucidate the mysteries of the rate demand note, simplify and dramatize the problems of the committee room, translate the medical officers' report into terms of human sickness and health, misery and happiness. There is here an enormous field for the documentary film maker, a field bearing a rich harvest of interest for the man with the imagination and enterprise to dig it out. And the men who do that, and those who finance their work, will be doing much more than make fine films: they will be helping to turn British democracy from an abstraction into a reality.

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IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION: J. V. DURDEN

BOOK REVIEW

Going to the Cinema, by Andrew Buchanan. (Phoenix House.) 7s. 6d.

This book is dedicated to the 'adult cinema-goer of tomorrow' and it fulfils its dedication by placing before its readers a clear exposition of every aspect of film-making.

The author takes the film from its very inception through its shooting, editing, distribution and final exhibition and in concise words and simple terms he explains exactly 'what goes on'. There is not the faintest suggestion of talking down to the young amateur—Mr Buchanan makes use of plenty of technical terms but is always careful to explain such terms in a manner which will in no way irritate any reader who may be at the age where he is slightly allergic to any hint of the school text-book.

There is a chapter on Documentary which ought to catch the interest of those who have never thought of the cinema in terms of anything but the Big Picture. The making of cartoons is clearly explained and there is another chapter about the news reel. The final chapter is an invitation to the young reader to learn all about the cinema and to set himself up as a critic of all the films he sees.

FEATURE FILM MUSIC AND THE DOCUMENTARY

By MUIR MATHIESON

THE influence of the documentary on feature film production has become increasingly significant during the last ten years. During the thirties this tendency was only slight, manifesting itself in pictures like the Korda-Flaherty film *Elephant Boy*. World War II resulted in a rapid expansion of the process, eventually producing pictures which were known simply as 'feature-documentaries'. The advent of such directors as Cavalcanti into the commercial studios brought about a liaison of fact and fiction that made this country's war films more realistic than those of, say, the United States, where no large independent documentary movement could be co-opted to vitalize Hollywood output. It was on these early fictional-documentaries that the new British film industry was founded, with productions of the *Forty-ninth Parallel* and *First of the Few* calibre, giving our film makers the morale and prestige to attempt *Henry V*, *The Way Ahead*, and *Men of Two Worlds*. Such is the debt that features owe to documentary.

During the present transition from war to a period of desperate economic recovery the documentary influence remains. True, with the departure of Churchills and Spitfires the purely factual aspect becomes less spectacular but the lesson of the fighting days has not been forgotten. As Harry Watt prepares to follow through the triumph of *The Overlanders* with another outdoor story from Australia; as Ealing Studios dispatch cameramen to the Antarctic to secure backgrounds for *Scott of the Antarctic*; as Shepherd's Bush studios shoot *Rescue*, a film version of the factual story of the Dakota snow-bound crash of a few months ago; so the value of a realistic setting to commercial productions is demonstrated far more clearly than it was before the war. Social problems of the day are more courageously tackled by film makers than before; again the documentary influence leads the way.

It is also true that feature film music has derived considerable benefit from the realm of documentary. Apart from the fact that the raising of the general standards of intelligence and subject matter in British films has inevitably given more encouragement to composers to enter the industry and that, having taken the plunge, they have found dramatic material worthy of the finest possible musical creative effort, there are one or two special reasons why feature music is a debtor to documentary music.

For good or evil, it has long been recognized that music today falls into two strongly divided camps—the 'popular' music (dance music, jazz, swing, light 'numbers') on the one hand, and on the other, serious music (symphonic music, chamber works, opera and ballet). Despite the fact that many more people are willing to change camps today than they were ten years ago, the two divisions remain—the 'Great Schism' as one very famous musicologist called it. This has meant that serious composers have tended to draw further and further away from the general trend, avoiding the musical pursuits of the millions and consorting with their fellow-intellectuals with music that they—and very often only they—understand. A 'vacuum' tendency set in.

When a composer of serious music turns to the

cinema the documentary film can be of tremendous value in bringing the musician face to face with reality. Documentarians as a race are realists; composing music for documentary requires realism. I remember the case of Dr Ernst Meyer and Cavalcanti's *North Sea*. The film was about the sea and the fishing fleets. The director sent his composer into the fishing towns, where he went to sea with the trawlers and worked on board among the fish and the nets. It must have been a hectic business, but the result was the realistic score that the director was after. At Denham we have a similar instance at the moment, for William Alwyn (for many years a documentary music expert) has recently been to Ireland prior to the composition of music for an essentially native production, *Captain Boycott*. The move towards personal contact between composers and modern society finds particular expression in the factual field, and in this respect the documentary aids the feature score by giving musicians a chance to find their feet on the terra firma of filmic reality before going on to the stringent requirements of the commercial cinema.

The further point can be made here, that as features gain more and more from the factuals, realistic music becomes increasingly important. In *Men of Two Worlds*, for example, thousands of feet of native music were recorded in Tanganyika by Thorold Dickinson's location unit; this was

brought back to this country and Arthur Bliss was able to spend many absorbing hours in examining it before proceeding with his score, all of which was based on the native music. Thus he had the opportunity, through the influence of the documentary technique, to create realistic music which had for its background the colourful sound of the jungle, yet within the artistic conception of the film allowed him to write music that was satisfying to Western ears. Generally speaking, the opportunity which films offer for the musician to avail himself of local folk tunes and to use them as a basis for his composition is a very desirable condition and one which, in its sphere, adds further to the documentary flavour of feature productions.

As a field for musical experiment, the feature film maker again looks to the documentarian for a lead. There is so little time and money available in features for trial and error; everything must go to a schedule and mistakes mean serious delays. In documentary schedules are not so rigid and the composer is not swamped by dialogue; he has a chance to experiment, for the atmosphere of documentary is more congenial to the man with new ideas than is the bustle of the production people trying to achieve a delivery date for a publicized premiere. For this reason a number of composers are seen at their best in factual

(Continued page 111, foot col. 1)

ETCETERAS . . . 51

During the past 10 years, REALIST has made 20 films about Agriculture, 17 on Medical subjects, 13 on Health, 11 on Industry and 51 about a wide variety of other subjects, ordinary and extraordinary—51 etceteras.

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GERRARD 1988

SCIENTIFIC FILM NEWS

By

MICHAEL MICHAELIS

'To promote the national and international use of the scientific film in order to achieve the widest possible understanding and appreciation of scientific method and outlook, especially in relation to social progress'. Thus reads the first object of the Scientific Film Association.

Scientific films are being recognized by daily widening sections of the public for the valuable contributions they are making to the social, industrial and educational life of the community. The part played by the Scientific Film Association in bringing about this recognition is of major importance. With almost 450 corporate and ordinary members, including Scientific Film Societies having a total membership of about ten thousand, the Association is the only body in this country representing the interests of users of scientific films. Its activities, carried out almost entirely by voluntary labour, are very widespread. Within the compass of this short article, only some of the more important aspects of the Association's work can be outlined. It is hoped to enlarge upon these and to present further Scientific Film News in later issues of this journal.

Apart from the Scientific Film Societies, three of the foremost users of scientific films, served by the Association, are Industry, Medicine and Schools.

Industry: A conference was held by the Scientific Film Association in London on March 6th, 1947, under the title 'Films in Industry'. Over two hundred of the country's leading industrial concerns sent delegates who were addressed by a number of experts in the subject.

Mr R. K. Neilson Baxter spoke on the 'Industrial Film Maker's Problems' and called for close co-operation between industrial sponsor and film producer.

Instructor Commander J. A. Burnett, RN, dealt with the effective use of films and film strips in technical training and gave some practical demonstrations.

Mr F. H. Perkins traced the film's contributions through the various stages of technical instruction.

Mr D. R. O. Thomas spoke of the film as an integrating medium treating imaginatively the responsibilities of industry within the community.

An open forum for questions and a film show concluded the conference, which was held under the chairmanship of Sir Stephen Tallents, KCMG, CB, CBE.

Valuable work is progressing on bringing up-to-date the interim list, compiled by the Industrial Committee of the Association, of 200 industrial films available in this country.

A scheme inaugurated by the Association for joint sponsorship of industrial training films, is approaching its practical working form. Under this scheme, a number of firms jointly sponsor films of interest to them all, thus reducing the cost per firm of film production.

Medicine: A catalogue of medical films available in Great Britain is being published jointly by the Association and the Royal Society of Medicine. Over 800 films will be listed, the result of investigations by Dr Brian Stanford, hon. secretary of the Medical Committee, working on behalf of the Association under a special grant from the Royal Society of Medicine.

The use of films in medical teaching has received widespread attention through conferences held by the Association last year. Lists of subjects on which films are desired by teachers of medicine have been published as a result of a detailed questionnaire to medical schools.

The establishment of a Central Medical Film Library in this country is being advocated as a means of making widely available the pioneer work of many individuals in this field. British medical films lead the world and should be freely available at least in their country of origin, if not beyond.

Schools: In so far as all scientific films can be said to be educational in the widest sense, the special value of such films as an educational tool is recognized by the Association. It is also appreciated that other visual aids, such as filmstrips, models and wall charts have a specific part to contribute to a coherent lesson.

In consequence of these considerations, the Association, through its Education Committee, drew up plans for the 'Visual Unit' comprising all these media. These plans, submitted to the Ministry of Education, were accepted and production of the first visual unit on *Water Supply* is almost complete. It marks an important step in the concept of visual education which the Ministry has recognized by the recent appointment of the National Council for Visual Education. Further memoranda on the production of visual units have been submitted to the Ministry and are receiving attention.

Film viewings for science teachers are now held regularly and methods for the appraisal of school films are being developed.

The collection of film data, appraisal of films and publication of supplements to the Association's film catalogues and film lists are proceeding apace to keep abreast of the growing quest for information from all parts of the world. Indeed, to complete this short survey, mention should be made of the international contacts being developed. An interim report on *Scientific Films in Foreign Countries* has been published. The preliminary investigation covered 33 countries throughout the world, albeit briefly, and additions will be made as more information becomes available. Conversely, too, the distribution of British films in those countries is being investigated and actively encouraged wherever possible.

Close contact is being maintained with UNESCO at whose disposal the Association has placed such services as its specialized knowledge best fits it to perform. Finally, in collaboration with l'Institut de Cinématographie Scientifique in Paris, preparations are being completed for the forthcoming inauguration of an International Scientific Film Association pointing the way to free interchange of films and knowledge between the peoples of the world.

The publications mentioned in this report are available from the Scientific Film Association, 34 Soho Square, London, W1.

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with a deep social message are not being made, it is sometimes a political failure; as often, the film is commissioned but subject to official delay. But, with a Labour Government, it is important to realize that new problems arise, and that the character of interpretive films must alter. It was heartening to read in a recent *DNL* a plea for more Labour films. The trade unions and co-ops are the natural allies of the documentary movement, and the good work done in their company needs extending. The task of pre-war was to produce films with a realist, human slant; today it has developed into that of fitting documentary to the new and wide functions that recent social legislation demands. To this end, we must enlist the aid of the Labour movement to supplement the programme of the COI. At the same time, it is necessary to get into contact with audiences and to widen them. In this two-way business, all technicians need to be more closely in touch with the co-op guilds, union branches, film societies and other organizations which make up the non-theatrical audience. Lectures and publicity go hand in hand with film-making. Note, hand in hand.

But these tasks will not be achieved without a concrete expression of the fundamental unity shared by technicians from separate units. A magazine is fine, but it's not enough; means must be found to canalize the energy of individuals to the general advantage. And we must get straight in our minds the question of what films are worth making. You see, we face tasks vastly beyond our capacity; it will be many years before we can satisfy the need for realist films of every kind. Until then, there isn't time for invidious comparisons; the job is to improve the quality, not restrict the variety, of the product.

(Continued from page 109, col. 3)

films; some of the best scores by Ralph Vaughan Williams have been for such pictures.

Lastly, we have to thank the documentarians for the splendid work they do in training composers for the feature film world. Composing for pictures is not easy; it is a specialized, highly-technical procedure and cannot be acquired overnight. With so many young musicians of today feeling a desire to write for the screen, the outlook would be poor were it not for documentary. In the friendly atmosphere of the small unit, the young composer has a chance to study film procedure in detail. He has a picture of some two or three reels to contend with and is not overwhelmed with the necessity to write 50 minutes of music in about three weeks; the orchestration is not so complex, for the orchestra is smaller; the moods are more clearly defined in factual films than they are in features; all this gives the youthful writer his opportunity to acquire confidence as a picture expert.

The feature film has always been the better in this country for the support given it by a backbone of documentarians. In all branches of production, they have aided in the creation of a living and realistic standard of picture. In the case of music this is equally true. In bringing about a new contact between modern writers and the people, in presenting opportunities for musical experiment and in training newcomers to the industry, the documentary continues to render great service to the feature film makers.

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR: It would be more charitable to presume that Mr Anstey has never seen the early German films he compares *Odd Man Out* to, than that his critical capacity lacks the necessary understanding of simple human emotions. *Odd Man Out* sets out to be a study in pity. I'd say it very largely succeeds but even assuming it did not, it would still be a very far cry from the conscious and 'purposeful' Nihilism of the German 1920s. These post 1918 war films were inspired by Kafka's discovery of God's indifference and even enmity to the human race, and the last thing they were concerned with was the portrayal of emotion. They were logical statements of the purposelessness of life as it was then conceived by their German makers. Their heroes were more often than not quite decent human beings (like Kafka's hero in the *Trial*), who had never done anything wrong but were 'arrested' all the same. The inevitability of an undeserved curse reminiscent of Oedipus Rex was the theme that the German artists were most fond of. Now Johnny was no Oedipus. He was a wrong 'un. His ideas were wrong, his politics vicious and impractical, his ethics non-existent except as far (may be) as his organization was concerned. He deserved everything he got. He was an example of a very nasty type of human being whose evil nature found its fullest flower in Nazi Germany. And yet even he was worthy of pity, because he was a human being in adversity. Thus he became the test by which we are judged. We and also the bystanders who in the film came into accidental

contact with him. The argument was not: 'Look at this world and see how rotten it is, so let's tear it down.' The argument was: 'Look at this man and pity him, because, like so many of us, he knew not what he did.'

Unfortunately Mr Wright's praise is as grotesque as Mr Anstey's comparison. *Odd Man Out* was an average film. But among so much bad a good average looks far better than it really is. It was only after I had seen *The Man Within* that I could account for the unsatisfactory patches which mar *Odd Man Out*. In *The Man Within* Sydney Box has at last found the secret of dressing up the 'highbrow' in 'lowbrow' clothing. I think Carol Reed was aiming at something similar. The adult ideas were to be masked under the star appeal of James Mason and the old favourite cops and robbers theme. An admirable idea but unfortunately here and there Mr Reed could not quite make up his mind on how far the average audience could be trusted and was therefore guilty of playing down to the adolescent minds which would require the flamboyant but irrelevant artist to reassure themselves that it is only a film after all and that this kind of thing couldn't really happen in their own lives.

Overpraise is very dangerous. Look around in your own field, Mr Wright. British Documentaries are supposed to be the best in the world even when they are half an hour too long and talk the audience to sleep.

Yours very truly,

WALTER SULKA

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Richard Massingham in charge of production

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TECHNICIAN'S ARTICLE ON NON-THEATRICAL DISTRIBUTION HAS PROVOKED THESE TWO REPLIES

SIR: 'Inside Information on Non-Theatrical Distribution' by a Technician, certainly draws the spotlight to a problem, or rather a set of problems, that has caused, and indeed still does cause, much 'heartburning' among distributors of sub-standard films.

The Army Kinema Corporation distributes, and exhibits, more 16 mm. prints than any other single organization and, whilst I cannot relieve 'Technician's' intense despondency by giving him information of the AKC's method of accepting and distributing 16 mm. prints, I propose to give a brief résumé of the care and method with which the AKC tackle this problem.

When placing an order with a laboratory, for the bulk printing of an individual subject, a strict instruction is given for a test print to be delivered before the bulk order is proceeded with. This print is carefully viewed by an expert viewer, the track is measured by a densitometer (yes 'Technician', I am happy to inform you the AKC *does* possess a densitometer, and we know how to read it) and on the result of this print it is decided (a) if the print can be accepted as a criterion for the remaining prints, (b) what adjustments by the laboratory are necessary to achieve this purpose; *note* a further test print may be called for after such adjustments, before permission is granted to proceed with the bulk order, (c) to stop distribution of the subject on 16 mm; this is only decided after consultation with the laboratory has revealed that no better result is obtainable.

The AKC Distribution Department at Wembley is equipped with four excellent 16 mm., in addition to two 35 mm. viewing theatres, and, it is in these that the prints of bulk orders are carefully examined by viewers especially trained for the job. An inquiry from any laboratory manager will confirm that the AKC insist on a high technical quality in their 16 mm. prints and, further, that when prints are rejected, intelligent technical reasons are given for such rejections.

Referring to 'Technician's' article again, we have now reached the stage when a good print has found its way into circulation, and, it is here quite frankly the AKC benefits considerably from the experiences gained during the war by the Army Kinematograph Service. During this period it was discovered that, although prints of the highest quality were used, the results on the screen, both picture and sound, were frequently disastrous. This was due almost entirely to the fact that although service engineers had a good general idea of the necessary adjustments needed from time to time on the projector, they did not possess a good medium to carry out such adjustments. As a result a technical panel was formed comprised of army personnel who were acknowledged experts in each section of their particular branch of the film trade. From this panel came two most comprehensive test reels (screen and sound) for primary use when making adjustments to mobile projectors. These test reels are now used extensively by AKC service engineers in order that the best possible results should be obtained from the projectors in use. Further, as far as acoustics are concerned, in all courses held by the AKC for projectionists, etc., periods are set aside for special instruction and practical guidance is given on this matter.

It will be seen, therefore, that the Army Kinema Corporation is very alive to the problems affecting 16 mm. presentation and one must agree with 'Technician' there are many. However, we have proved that providing each individual does his, or her, part, the result on the screen can be comparable to that obtained by the use of 35 mm. prints.

Yours faithfully,

L. S. BAKER

Distribution Manager

Army Kinema Corporation

DEAR SIR,

As 16 mil. operators of considerable experience we were interested in the article on 'Non-Theatrical Distribution' by a technician in the April-May issue of your journal.

With what 'Technician' writes about the quality of most 16 mil. prints we must heartily agree; with his categorical statement about 16 mil. projection we beg to differ.

We have, a week or two ago, taken over a village hall which has been acoustically treated and which, for the past year, has been served by the former owner with twin 35 mil. projectors of 1938 manufacture.

When we acquired the hall we installed a 'single' Carpenter 16 mil. projector with some misgivings as we were not at all sure how the audience would react to the two 'breaks' in each two-hour show, but the capital cost of twin projectors was a limiting factor at the time.

The results of this experiment are as follows:

(1) We have had larger audiences at *each* of the nine shows we have given to date than the previous owner had at *any* time during the year he operated; (2) we have been congratulated by all on the quality of sound and picture and we are, each evening, attracting people who did not previously attend the exhibitions; (3) we have been visited by two local 35 mil. theatre managers and, after seeing and hearing, both have reacted in the same manner. (Well, if I had not been present myself I would not have believed it.)

As to method: the sound is tested at least twice weekly by running through both a gliding frequency and a constant frequency test film. Before each show the whole optical system is thoroughly dismantled and cleaned. This is done in a routine order so that nothing is missed. The films are examined on arrival and between each showing. After the renters had been saddled with a few 'reverse charge' trunk calls for replacement copies we now find they exercise greater care in the choice of copies they send us! Records for the non-sync are chosen to suit the feature and no departure from arranged programme is permitted.

The one factor on which we cannot rely is the quality of the prints. On this point we are in entire agreement with 'Technician'. Many times at the start of the film the writer has, momentarily, been certain that the shutter has shifted on its spindle only to find that the 'ghost' has been caused by the optical printer.

We cordially invite 'Technician', if he is ever in this part of the country, to call on us and we will only be too pleased to let him see what can be done with a 16 mil. outfit given a decent print.

Yours faithfully,

GEORGE HAIR, Director

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